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THE 4-H CLUB SITUATION

C B Smith

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Boys and girls clubs

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics

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Interest in club work has noticeably increased during the past four or five years. Directors of extension are giving club work increased attention. In 1926, enrollment was increased by about 21,000 club members. In 1927, membership was increased by 33,000, and in 1928 by 44,000. The 1928 club enrollment was over 663,000, while the 1929 enrollment is probably beyond the 700,000 mark. This is a sizable enterprise. We expect to see it more than double, however, in the next 10 years.

Such data as we have been able to obtain from our surveys indicate that club boys and girls average a little less than 14 years of age and remain in club work a little less than two years. These are significant figures. They mean that we must so organize our club work that we teach the essential things we want the boys and girls to know within the first two years of club work.

What are the fundamental things we want to teach in club work, and teach them with certainty the first two years of club membership? Other than the information gained and technique or skill acquired in the regular demonstration project, what are the qualities, the vision, the ambitions we want club members to gain in the two years? What are the lasting qualities we want left as a guide for life? I know of no bigger or more important task before this group of State club leaders than to determine this matter. It is an objective in which we can possibly develop minimum standards for all States.

In the public schools throughout the United States, we are a unit in teaching the three R's up to the eighth grade. Schools may vary in what is taught in addition to the three R's, but every school teaches the three R's in the first seven grades. What are the three R's in club work that we ought, all of us everywhere, to teach the first two years of club work?

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Ought we not as leaders to address ourselves to this matter and determine upon the essentials, perhaps at this conference? At least, I think we should appoint a committee to think the matter through and advise us.

Without attempting to explore the field at this time very far or to go into detail, it is our view that some of the things we should with certainty teach each club member the first two years of club work are as follows:

(1) It is the man who works that is the man who counts.

(2) It is the trained man who accomplishes most and gets farthest.

(3) Agriculture is one of the noblest of all occupations.

(4) In agriculture there is a comfortable, satisfying living but no great wealth. The farm is a good place to live and to bring up a family.

(5) Opportunities for becoming great through rendering great service are as good on the farm as they are in any other calling. There are great problems in agriculture which need solution.

(6) The agricultural colleges, experiment stations, and United States Department of Agriculture are safe and reliable sources of agricultural information. Every club member should have opportunity to visit the State agricultural college and experiment station at least once.

(7) Demonstration in agriculture and home making are part of the world's work. The boy or girl who takes part in a demonstration is doing a worth-while thing.

(8) The American farmer and his family are entitled to a good living, a fine social life, and time for recreation.

(9) Every club member should be taught that to know trees, plants, birds, insects, stars, soils, and weather and their ways is to have knowledge and culture.

(10) Strength comes from united effort; cooperation is one of the biggest needs of agriculture.

Some visible thing should come into every home as a result of club work. Parents delight in showing what their children have done.

You will think of other matters that should be taught with certainty the first two years of club work.

What I have here mentioned in these 10 separate items could with study probably be reduced to three or four essentials, but we ought at this conference to have a statement of these essentials.

Some of the boys and girls who go from club work into Smith-Hughes work will want to continue in club work. There can be no objection to this, where the boy or girl has time to do both. We should feel happy that we perhaps have been the instrument that has inspired the boy or girl to take this additional study, and thus better prepare himself or herself for life's work. In our effort for club membership, our biggest field lies with the group of boys and girls not in Smith-Hughes schools or in agricultural high-school classes but with the groups who do not have the advantage of these two institutions.

Educators and students of club work who have investigated the matter pronounce club work educational. We, here, I take it, are all of the same opinion. It develops knowledge and judgment and skill in the child, and whatever does these things is worthy of wide promotion.

Four-H club work should play an important part in the educational plan for every farm boy and girl throughout the whole period between childhood and adulthood. Few farm boys and girls belong to organizations other than the 4-H clubs. The benefits in social education so gained are being increasingly recognized. The numerous group activities enable farm boys and girls from an early period to learn to play together, plan together, team together, and achieve together. Through the club, these young people learn to handle efficiently business affairs and to express in public their point of view in a clear, concise manner. They learn, too, what it means to give and take; to relinquish personal desires for the good of the group; to follow the leader as well as to lead; to place responsibility as well as to assume responsibility; to have a voice in the development of the extension and general community programs which they are to carry out; and, perhaps more important than all else, to meet and work with State and community leaders in different lines of activity--men and women of outstanding integrity and achievement.

The development of a cooperative and altruistic spirit, and a broadened vision of the community through such social activities will beget an intelligent and constructive interest in national welfare and a justifiable satisfaction and pride in rural community accomplishment.

We have lately asked the State what proportion of their time county agricultural agents, home demonstration agents, and county club agents give to club work. We have here the data reported by 15 widely-scattered States:

4-H CLUB WORK - 1928
Enrollment and Completions

Agents	Time devoted to work	Enrollment	Completions	Percentage completing
	Percentage			
County agricultural agents	28	139	93	66
Home demonstration agents.	46	197	127	64
County club agents.....	87	570	431	75.6

From the table, it will be noted that in the States reporting, county agricultural agents who gave 28 per cent of their time on the average to club work, enrolled thereby 139 members in 1928, 66 per cent of whom completed their projects; home demonstration agents gave 46 per cent of their time on the average to club work, enrolled 197 members in 1928, and had 64 per cent of completions; county club agents gave 87 per cent of their time to club work, enrolled 570 members in 1928, and had 75.6 of completions. Now we have between 11 and 12 million rural boys and girls of club age, located mostly in 2,850 rural counties, or close to 4,000 boys and girls of club age in each rural county.

I assume that our minimum effort is to encourage every one of these boys and girls to take up the educational game of club work for at least two years at some period in their life between 10 and 20 years of age.

If we left this task to county agricultural agents alone and each agent worked as at present, enrolling about 139 annually, it would require 30 years to enroll the 4,000 boys and girls in the average county and keep them in club work but a single year. To keep each member in club work two years would require 60 years of effort. Merely depending on the county agricultural agent to do our club work will not meet the need.

If we add a home demonstration agent to a county, she and the county agricultural agent together enroll an average of 336 boys and girls in club work each year. At this rate, it would require about 12 years to enroll all the rural boys and girls of an average county and to keep them in club work but for a single year. To enroll each club member for a two-year period would require 24 years.

This is still too slow a process of enrollment to meet the need of the situation.

If, now, the county agricultural agent and the home demonstration agent in each county enroll as many as they are now enrolling and we add to the group a county club agent or assistant in club work, the enrollment is

906 boys and girls per county each year. This would require but 4.4 years to enroll them all for a single year, or 8.8 years to enroll them all for a two-year period, which, as I stated above, is about the minimum we want to attain. This is all set out in the table below:

4-H CLUB PROBLEM
Time Required to Enroll all of Club Age in Average County

Agents	Enrollment per county	Number to be enrolled in average county	Per-cent-age en-rolled	Years required to enroll all: 1 yr. in club work	Years required to enroll all: 2 yrs. in club work
County agents alone.....	139	4000	3.5	30	60
County agents and home demon-stration agents.....	336	4000	8.2	12	24
County agents, home demonstra-tion agents and club agents	906	4000	22.6	4.4	8.8

It is clear from the figures available that the club problem in most State can not be solved by being left to the county agent and home demonstration agent alone. Additional help is needed. In most States, extension plans that do not look forward to giving the county agricultural and home demonstration agent assistants in club work are faulty and should be remedied. The first step is to see the situation. Our directors are looking to us to see and to present these needs. When parents see the need, they will meet it. They have from the Government what they want for their children. They want club work. We wouldn't go far wrong if agricultural relief began with club work.

Another way of looking at the club enrollment problem is to put it on the basis of the number of rural boys and girls who reach club age each year. Our studies show this to be about 10 per cent of the total boys and girls of club age in the country at any one time. In the above county of 4,000 young people, this would be 400 entering club age each year. In order to care for this group as they come along and to keep them in club work two years each would require an annual enrollment of 800 boys and girls. In any case, we need more help than we get now if we are to do the job ahead of us.

In these conferences during the last two years, we have made some progress in club work. We have agreed on certain general objectives. We have adopted a common pledge. We have settled on a club pin. We have provided for a national 4-H club songbook. We have begun the study of

minimum standards of our projects, so that completion of a project in one State may bear some relation to completion in that same project in another State.

All these things help. We also have a club uniform for the boys and girls who attend the national club camp. I wonder if the time isn't about here when we should give serious thought to a club uniform for both boys and girls when they attend their club meetings and other dress occasions. It is our belief that an attractive uniform for dress occasions at club meetings, fairs, camps, and short courses, would stimulate interest in boys and girls themselves and substantially strengthen club work. The uniform should be good enough and attractive enough so that boys and girls would be proud to be seen in it, and it should be distinctive, so that whenever seen it would be associated with club work. We should like to see the committee of club leaders appointed at this conference give serious consideration to the possibility of a national club uniform for both boys and girls.

There is another final thought that I want to leave with you. President Hoover has called attention to lawlessness in this country. I wonder if we should not make conscious effort in our club work to help teach the sanctity of law. The extension service, with its 6,000 paid leaders, 250,000 local leaders and 700,000 club members, could have a marked influence in the attitude of rural people toward law observance if we made that an accompaniment of our club program. Can we, as good citizens, do less? Shall we not make it a part of our teaching?

In closing, I would leave three thoughts in your minds--one, the need of agreeing upon the things we should with certainty teach the first two years of club work; second, the need of recognizing the size of the club program and the staff necessary to handle it if it is to be handled adequately; and the third, possible significance to club work of a uniform for dress occasions.

A big thing to be remembered in club work is that we are not only teaching a child, we are teaching a family. The whole family, particularly the father and mother, are watching what their child is doing and being taught and are being influenced themselves thereby. We are coming to see that club work, which shapes the outlook of the child and stimulates the thinking of both parents and child, has greater potential value than any other single phase of our extension work. It, therefore, behooves us to be concerned about the important things in club work. This group is the only extension group, aside from the directors, which meets in nation-wide conference each year. Much progress is expected of us. It is our business here to develop plans for the consideration of our directors that will result in guiding club work into its proper place in the extension system.

Club work is a live, growing thing, with new development every day. Leaders must be alert. They must take to their job an open mind every morning. We have not reached our maximum efficiency with the organization we now have. A large number of young people who have come up through the club work and have been trained in local leadership are awaiting our direction. How are we going to use them most effectively? What are we going to

do about this older group? Have we a program? Are we attacking the problem vigorously? Is the program for the county and State camps the best we can do? Are we leading this movement, or are we driven by it?

We now have more than twice as many men in extension work as women, but the enrollment of boys in agricultural projects has lagged behind that of girls. Is our program challenging enough to attract the young manhood of the farms? They are ready and willing to be led on to greater tasks and achievement. Have we the constructive leadership to harness this force for national advancement? The Congress, the State colleges, the business interests, the farm organizations are all squarely behind us in this work. They are expecting substantial results.

Club work is the most challenging job in the field of extension education today. Let us not quibble over details. Let us, rather, here in these meetings, address ourselves to the larger problems. Let us make this a working big-accomplishing conference, so that we may return to our homes with a clearer vision, a renewed confidence, so that we may again demonstrate the slogan of this organization, "Extension makes the unusual accomplishment a daily achievement."

Finally, may I add a brief statement regarding youth by Dr. Frank Crane:

> "The most important people in the world are the boys and girls in their teens.
>
> "It is they who settle all the great questions of life. What are these great questions? They are not politics, financial matters, or the question of tariff. These are simply incidental issues. The great questions are:
>
> "What life work are you going to follow?
>
> "What are you going to do with your ideals?
>
> "What will be your philosophy of life?
>
> "All these subjects and many others are disposed of by children under 20.
>
> "The happiness of this world is in the hands of the boys and girls.
>
> "A grown man or woman never has a 'great idea' that can not be traced back to youth.
>
> "Youth holds that inestimable treasure the rest of us have lost, that one priceless, intoxicating treasure--the future."